

Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest, Pietra Dura panel of a Venetian capriccio in gilt-bronze frame, After Giuseppe Zocchi, Italian, Case 14 (2023-24)

Statement from Expert Adviser

Statement of the Expert Adviser to the Secretary of State that the panel meets Waverley criteria two and three

See below

Statement from the Applicant

Statement from the applicant referencing the three Waverley criteria. The Reviewing Committee will designate an object as a 'national treasure' if it considers that its departure from the UK would be a misfortune on one or more of the following three grounds:

- a) Is it closely connected with our history and national life?
- b) Is it of outstanding aesthetic importance?
- c) Is it of outstanding significance for the study of some particular branch of art, learning or history?

The applicant disagreed that the panel met any of the three Waverley criteria.

Note of case hearing

The Committee found that the panel did not meet any of the Waverley criteria.

See below

**RCEWA – Pietra Dura panel of a Venetian capriccio in gilt-bronze frame,
After Giuseppe Zocchi, Italian**

**Statement of the Expert Adviser to the Secretary of State that the panel
meets Waverley criteria two and three**

Please note that images and appendices referenced are not reproduced.

1. Brief Description of object(s)

A pietra dura panel showing a Venetian-style capriccio with an arcaded classical loggia running right to left. In the foreground, next to a large obelisk, a set of balustraded steps leads up to the loggia. To the left there is a ruined building, perhaps used as a crane, and a fallen capital. A man is depicted smoking an exceptionally long pipe by the loggia while a woman sells flowers from a basket by the obelisk. A man in a red cloak and tricorne hat stands by the crane. In the centre two figures wearing Ottoman dress are having an animated discussion. A gondola is shown on the water behind the loggia. With original gilt-bronze moulded frame.

Variolous hardstones including chalcedony, lapis lazuli, jaspers and marbles.

Made by the Grand Ducal Workshops (Opificio delle Pietra Dura), Florence, c.1750-60, almost certainly after a design by Giuseppe Zocchi (1711-1767).

33 x 40.5 cm unframed

42 x 49.5 cm framed

In excellent overall condition. A small hairline crack to one of the hardstone panels forming the sky.

2. Context

Almost certainly commissioned by Francis Stephen of Lorraine (1708-1765), Grand Duke of Tuscany from 1737 and later Francis I (1745-1765), Holy Roman Emperor and Consort to Empress Maria Theresia of Austria; purchased from a London Auction House, 1970s; sold Rosebery Fine Art, London, 21 February 2023 (341).

Although previously unrecorded, panels from the same commission are published here:

E. Maser, 'Drawings by Giuseppe Zocchi for works in Florentine Mosaics', in *Master Drawings* 5, 1967, no. 1, p. 47-53 (Appendix 1)

A. Giusti, *Il Museo dell'Opificio delle pietre dure a Firenze*, 1978

R. Distelberger, *Die Kunst des Steinschnitts: Prunkgefäße, Kameen, und Commessi aus der Kunstkammer*, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, 17 December, 2002 – 27 April 2003, p. 345

A. Giusti, *Arte e manifattura di corte a Firenze : dal tramonto dei Medici all'Impero, 1732-1815*, 2007.

A. Giusti, *Un capolavoro ritrovato: Il gioco del biliardo*, Florence, 2007 (privately printed)

W. Koeppe and A. Giusti, *Art of the Royal Court: Treasures in Pietre Dure from the Palaces of Europe*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1 July – 21 September, 2008, p. 296

Il fasto e la ragione: Arte del Settecento a Firenze, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, 30 May-30 September, 2009, n°88, pp. 246-247

A. Giusti (Annamaria), *La fabbrica delle meraviglie, la manifattura di pietredure a Firenze*, edifir, Florence, 2015, p. 54

3. Waverley criteria

Waverley 2 - Is it of outstanding aesthetic importance? If yes, please explain why?

This beautiful hardstone panel (fig. 1) belongs to a small group of pietra dura pictures of outstanding aesthetic and technical importance that were made in the Grand Ducal Workshops in Florence during the 1750s and early 1760s. As with the other pieces in the group, this panel is technically brilliant in its use of different coloured 'pietra dura' hardstones, including chalcedony, jaspers and lapis lazuli. The individual stones have been skilfully cut, shaped, combined on a stone panel and then polished to create a scene of great realism. As their Italian name— pietra dura – suggests, such stones are exceptionally hard and difficult to cut and polish, unlike some softer marbles and alabaster. It was the intention of the commission to which this panel almost certainly belongs that the panels should rival oil paintings in their realism. This realism and technical brilliance, particularly in the convincing depiction of animated human figures in the compositions, that marked a new departure for the Ducal Workshops after a period of decline in the early 18th century. The figures in this panel are brilliantly composed, particularly the two men wearing Ottoman dress in the centre of the panel that appear to be having an animated conversation while walking. The dramatic sense of perspective and light and shadow across the architecture is also cleverly evoked using darker and lighter hardstones. Rare pale blue chalcedony has been used to depict the sky, with the natural variations in the stone evoking light cloud.

The Ducal pietra dura workshops had been founded by the Medici in the 1580s and much of the workshops' earlier productions had been hardstone

panels depicting colourful flowers, fruit and exotic bird set against plain, often black backgrounds. Many of these panels were intended to be mounted into elaborate table tops and cabinets veneered in ebony or tortoiseshell. Today, this is the type of pietra dura work most commonly associated with Florentine work. Often quite large sections of the same hardstone were used in the depiction of the fruits, flowers and feathers, resulting in very colourful and decorative panels that lacked any real sense of realism of what they depicted and with little or no use of perspective. This panel, however, shows a much more sophisticated use of the individual hardstones where very small, differently coloured and toned sections are combined together - rather like individual brush strokes of in a painting - to create the scene. This technique involves the use of many more individual sections of hardstone that each have to be very precisely shaped and fitted together. The figures of Ottoman merchants in this panel, for examples, are composed of over 30 individual sections each, many of which are only a few millimetres across. This was a much more time-consuming process as hundreds of individual pieces of hardstone from a wide variety of hardstones are required to make up a single panel. Production of these panels appears to have been almost entirely limited to Imperial commissions for the Holy Roman Emperor, Francis I. Only around 60 panels appear to have been made for this single commission over 12 years. Although Florentine pietra dura panels had been popular with British collectors and Grand Tourists since the 17th century, these were mostly panels depicting fruit, flowers and birds. An example is the cabinet, now in the V&A, that was made for John Evelyn incorporating pietra dura plaques acquired by him in Florence during the 1640s (fig. 2). As far as I am aware, there are no known examples of this type of pietra dura 'painting' that show complex landscapes and architectural capriccios with figures currently in UK public collections.

The sophisticated and complex composition of this panel shows an architectural capriccio that suggests a Venetian waterside scene, although it does not depict an actual view of Venice. The composition can be confidently attributed to the painter and engraver Giuseppe Zocchi ((1711-1767) who was employed at the Grand Ducal Workshops between 1750 and 1767 to produce compositions for panels to be copied by the workshops in pietra dura panels for the Emperor. The finished panels, nearly all of which are still in Vienna (see below) are among the most celebrated and sophisticated of all the productions made by the Workshops during the 18th century.

Zocchi was already a well-known artist, celebrated for his oil paintings, frescos, drawings and engravings even before being employed by the Ducal Workshops (see appendix 1). He had trained with Florentine baroque painter Ranieri del Pace before travelling around Italy including Rome, Bologna – where he was awarded the prize for young students in painting at the Accademia in 1737 - and Venice. While in Venice he learnt the art of engraving. Zocchi's most famous work is the two-fold series of engravings after his drawings published in 1744 entitled *Selection of XXIV Views of the Principal Districts, Squares, Churches, and Palaces of the City of Florence and of Views of Villas and of Places in Tuscany*. 57 of Zocchi's oil paintings and 39 drawings survive in the Museo dell'Opificio della Pietra Dura a

Firenze. Although an original design has not been traced, comparison with these and with the pietra panels made after them in Vienna strongly suggests that Zocchi was also responsible for the design of this Venetian Capriccio panel. Particularly similar are the loggia, stairs, obelisk and ruined 'crane' in the foreground (figs 3-6). Similar animated figures in Ottoman dress also appear in some of Zocchi's views of the port of Livorno (figs 7-8).

Waverley 3 - Is it of outstanding significance for the study of some particular branch of art, learning or history? If yes, please explain why?

With its close similarities of composition, use of specific hardstones, techniques and original gilt-bronze frame, it would appear that this panel was originally intended to form part of the most significant Imperial commission received by the Grand Ducal Workshops during the entire 18th century. It is therefore of outstanding significance to the study of the history of the Workshops but also Imperial patronage and the relationship between the Hapsburg Court in Vienna and Tuscany. The use of hardstones that were mined locally in Tuscany but also imported from across Europe and Asia, including jaspers from Bohemia and lapis lazuli from Afghanistan, is also of great interest to the study of global trade routes and the history minerology and of mineral extraction and exploitation during this period.

With the death of the last Medici Grand Duke Gian-Gastone in 1737, Francis Stephen, consort of Empress Maria Theresia of Austria became Grand Duke of Tuscany. An active patron, although he visited Florence only once, Francis Stephen was instrumental in reviving the fortunes of the Grand Ducal workshops that had been in a period of decline since the beginning of the century. In 1748 he appointed the French goldsmith Louis Siret as Director of the Florentine Grand-Ducal workshops. It was Siret who suggested that Francis Stephen commission an extraordinarily ambitious series of pietra dura panels showing landscapes, architectural compositions and figures for display in Vienna. Artist Giuseppe Zocchi ((1711-1767) was subsequently employed from 1750 to provide the designs for these panels which marked a new departure for the Grand Ducal workshops with their compositions and technical virtuosity.

The scale of the commission was unlike anything previously achieved and over 60 panels were eventually delivered to Vienna for Francis Stephen between 1750 and 1762. They were displayed in Francis Stephen's Kaiserhaus, on the Wallnerstrasse in Vienna but in 1791 were moved to the Imperial Mineralogical Collection at the Hofburg Palace. Since 1841, they have been displayed in the Pietra Dura Zimmer at the Hofburg (fig.10) which now forms part of the reception rooms of the President of Austria.

Many of the Zocchi panels in the Pietra Dura Zimmer retain their distinctive gilt-bronze moulded frames which were probably supplied by a craftsman in the Grand Ducal Workshops known as Bombicci (see Christie's, New York, 11 December 2014, lot 47). These frames are stylistically very similar to the gilt-bronze frame on this panel and on the other panels have appeared in the open market in recent years (see below), strengthening the theory that they are all from the same Imperial Commission. A further set of Zocchi panels

was commissioned in the 1770s but this set has distinctive hardstone frames and it remains in the Museo dell'Opificio della Pietra Dura a Firenze situ.

It is not known why this panel was not delivered to Vienna. Nor is it a duplicate of one that was supplied to Vienna. Its early provenance is not recorded. The only Zocchi pietra dura panels known to have left the Imperial collection in Vienna are the set of *Five Senses* that Emperor Josef II, son of Francis Stephen, gave the Russian Tsar, who installed them in the famous Amber Room at Tsarskoye Selo (fig.9).

Further panels thought to be from this commission that have appeared on the open Market include an *Allegory of Architecture*, sold Sotheby's, Paris, 7 November, 2013, lot 193 (€1,463,900), fig. 10, *The Billiard Game*, sold Christie's, New York, 11 December 2014, lot 47 (\$905,000), fig. 11) and a pair of panels exhibited by Galerie Kugel, TFAF, 2017 (fig. 12).

Fig. 1 Pietra dura Venetian-style capriccio, made by the Grand Ducal Workshops (Opificio delle Pietra Dura), Florence, c.1750-60, almost certainly after a design by Giuseppe Zocchi (1711-1767)

Fig. 2 The John Evelyn Cabinet, V&A

Fig. 3 Two oil paintings by Giuseppe Zocchi, Museo dell'Opificio della Pietra Dura a Firenze

Fig. 4 Four oil paintings by Giuseppe Zocchi, Museo dell'Opificio della Pietra Dura a Firenze (b&w)

Fig. 5 Four oil paintings by Giuseppe Zocchi, Museo dell'Opificio della Pietra Dura a Firenze (b&w)

Fig. 6 Pietra panel after a design by Giuseppe Zocchi, Pietra Dura Zimmer, Hofburg, Vienna

Fig. 7 Pietra dura panel showing Livorno after a design by Giuseppe Zocchi, Pietra Dura Zimmer, Hofburg, Vienna

Fig. 8 Oil painting showing Livorno by Giuseppe Zocchi, Museo dell'Opificio della Pietra Dura a Firenze

Fig. 9 Pietra dura panel from the Amber Room, Tsarskoye Selo

Fig. 10 The Pietra Dura Zimmer in the Hofburg, Vienna

Fig. 11 *Allegory of Architecture*, sold Sotheby's, Paris, 7 November, 2013, lot 193

Fig. 12 *The Billiard Game*, sold Christie's, New York, 11 December 2014, lot 47

Fig. 13 Pair of panels exhibited by Galerie Kugel, TFAF, 2017

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*[Information has been withheld here in line with the requirements of section **40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 –Personal information.** A public authority is entitled to withhold information under section 40 (2) where the information is personal data]*

Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest, note of case hearing, Case 14 (2023-24): Pietra Dura panel of a Venetian capriccio in gilt bronze frame, After Giuseppe Zocchi	
Meeting date	Thursday 29 February 2024
Object	Pietra Dura panel of a Venetian capriccio in gilt-bronze frame, After Giuseppe Zocchi
Expert Adviser's objection	The Assistant Keeper, Curator of Decorative Arts and Sculpture, The Ashmolean Museum, had objected to the export of the panel under the second and third Waverley criteria on the grounds that its departure from the UK would be a misfortune because it was of outstanding aesthetic importance and it was of outstanding significance for the study of the history of the Grand Ducal Workshops during the entire 18 th century and of Imperial patronage and the relationship between the Habsburg Court in Vienna and Tuscany.
Committee Members & Independent Assessors	The initial meeting was scheduled to happen in person on the 14 February 2024. On that date all of the regular eight Committee members and the three independent assessors, acting as temporary members of the Committee, were present and able to inspect the panel. All eight Committee members and three independent assessors attended the meeting virtually on 29 February 2024.
Additional details	On 14 February 2024 it was noted that the Committee had some concerns with the Expert Adviser's report and it was agreed that the Committee should raise this with him before the case proceeded and inform the applicant. After doing so, and following further discussion with the Independent Assessors, it was agreed that the case should be adjourned until 29 February 2024. The Expert Adviser agreed to submit an updated report, and the hearing would then proceed remotely.
Value on the licence	The value shown on the export licence application was £838,825.64, which represented the sterling equivalent of the agreed sale price of €980,000 on the date of the export licence.
	The applicant was informed that there was currently an interim process in place for Committee hearings. The Committee was still holding hybrid meetings, but any Committee members, including the independent assessors, were required to inspect the object under consideration prior to discussing the case and voting. Any permanent Committee members or independent

	<p>assessors who were not able to view the object were not able to vote.</p> <p>The applicant confirmed that the owner understood the circumstances under which an export licence might be refused.</p>
VAT	<p>The applicant confirmed that the value did not include VAT and that VAT would be payable in the event of a UK sale.</p>
Expert Adviser's comments	<p>The expert adviser stated that they did not have anything further to add to their submission.</p> <p>When questioned about a potential allegorical theme of the panel, the expert replied that he had not been able to identify a clear or obvious allegorical subject, but this provided a good opportunity for further research. Further to this, the expert suggested that it could potentially be an architectural capriccio.</p>
Applicant's comments	<p>The applicant stated that they disagreed that this panel met any of the three Waverley criteria. They agreed it was a beautiful panel, but that it was not as compositionally accomplished as others in the series to which it may be linked. They noted that it employed a patchwork of different elements found in other panels and based on their current knowledge, it was not recorded as part of the commission sent to the emperor, hence why it was not with the rest of the collection in Vienna.</p>
Committee's discussion	<p>The expert adviser and applicant retired and the Committee discussed the case. They agreed that the panel was very beautiful, that the polish and workmanship were of high quality, and noted the fine technique, especially within the architecture and shadows. However, overall they did not think it was of as high quality as other similar pietra dura panels from this workshop and that it lacked visual impact.</p> <p>They thought the opportunity for further research into the subject was potentially intriguing, and recognised that more scientific and technical analysis on the panel could be interesting, but they were not convinced there was enough evidence of a connection to the rest of the known collection in Vienna and they could not see other relevant avenues for research. While interesting, they concluded that the panel did</p>

	not meet the high bar of outstanding significance needed to meet the Waverley criteria.
Waverley Criteria	The Committee voted on whether the panel met the Waverley criteria. Of the 11 members, no member voted that it met the first Waverley criterion. No member voted that it met the second Waverley criterion. Five members voted that it met the third Waverley criterion; six voted that it did not. The panel was therefore found not to meet the Waverley criteria
Communication of findings	The expert adviser and the applicant returned. The Chairman notified them of the Committee's decision on its recommendations to the Secretary of State.